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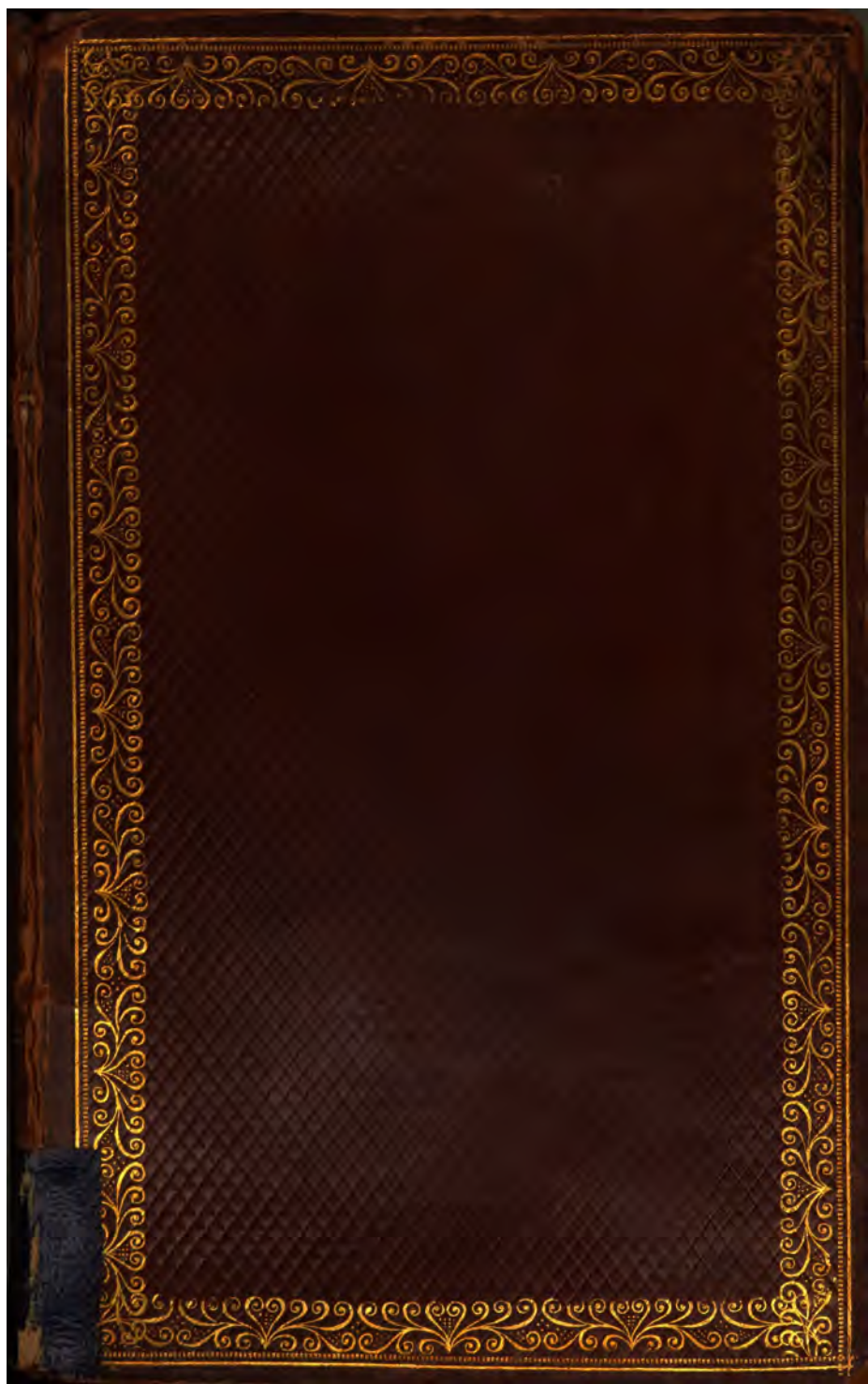
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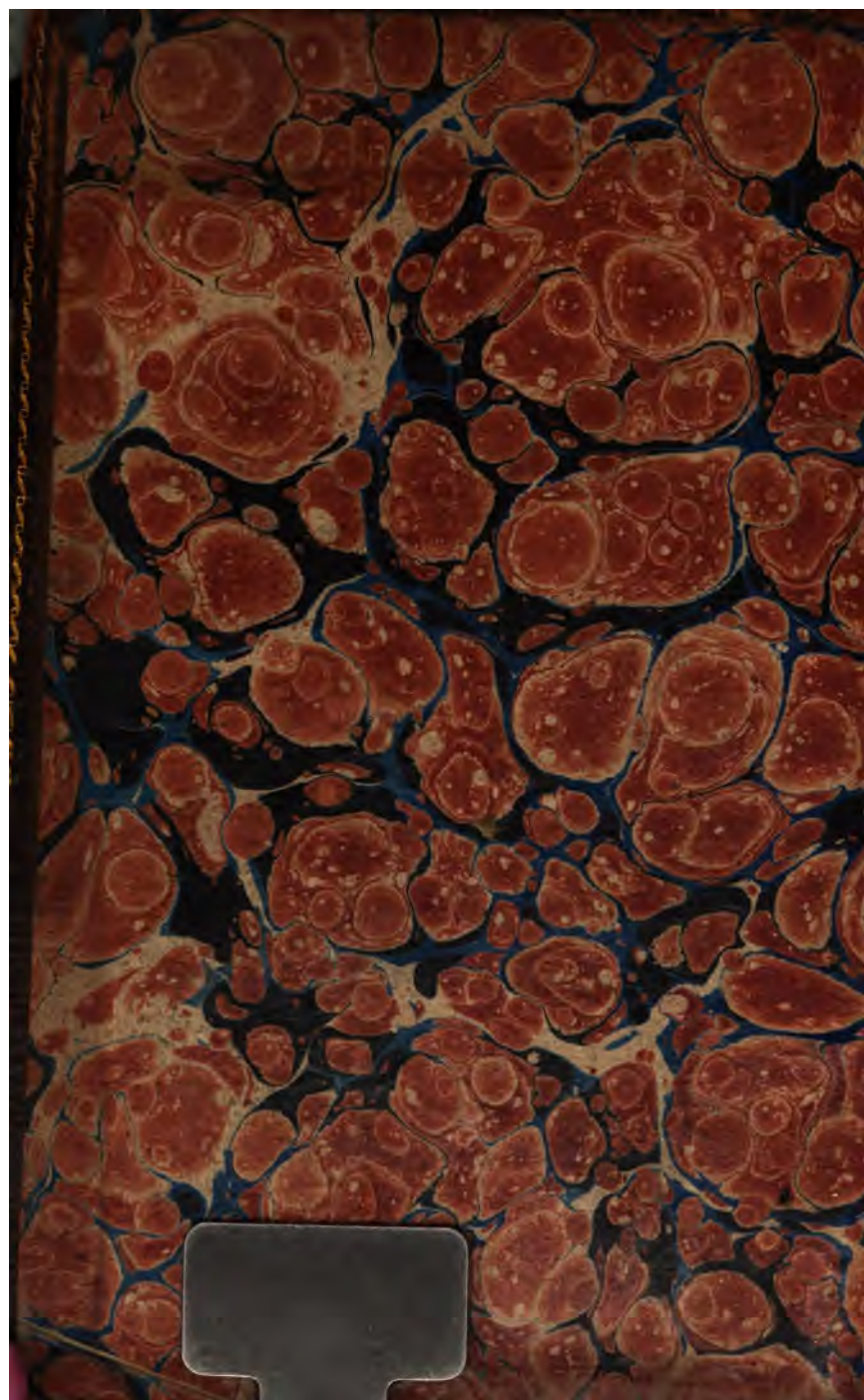
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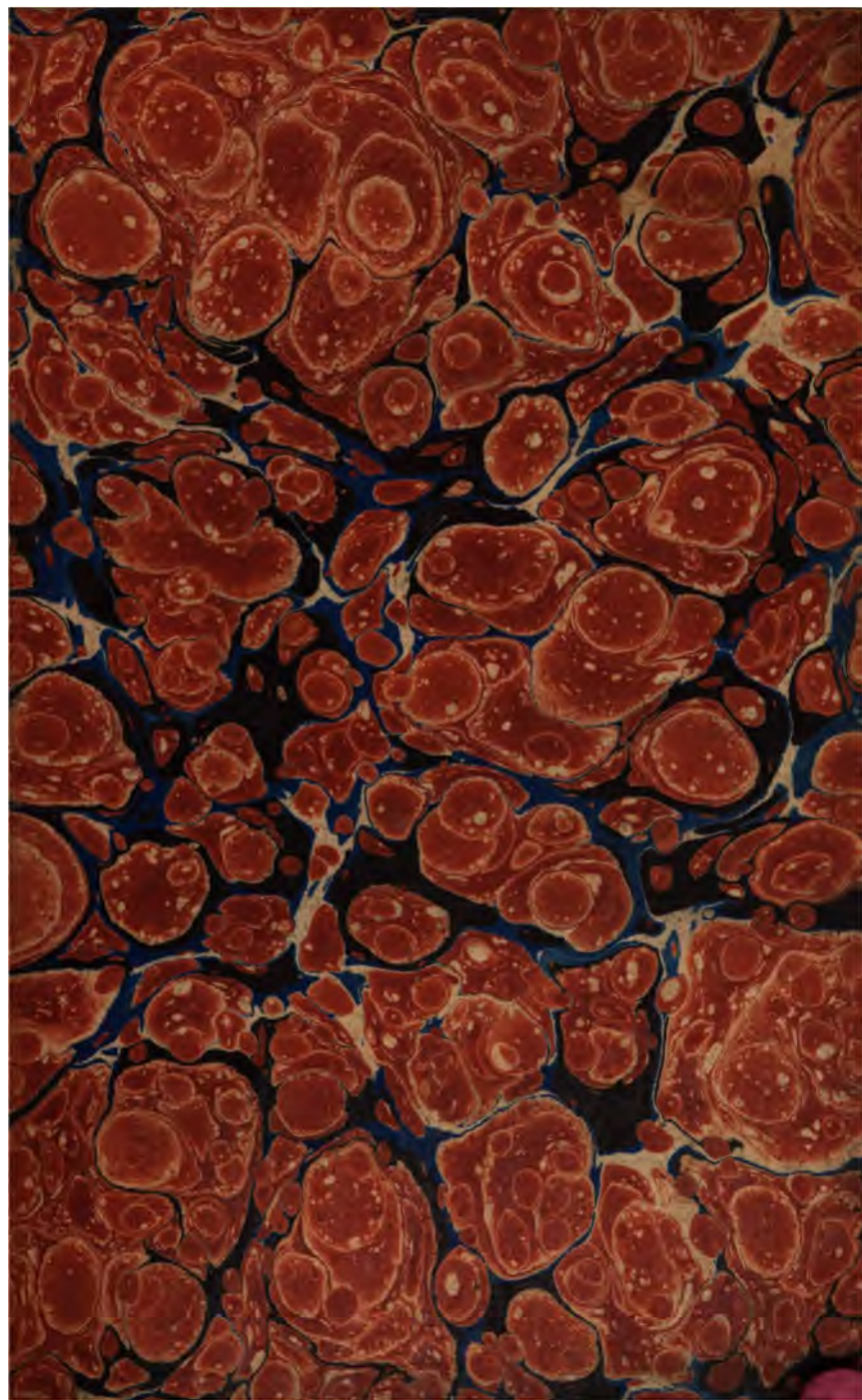
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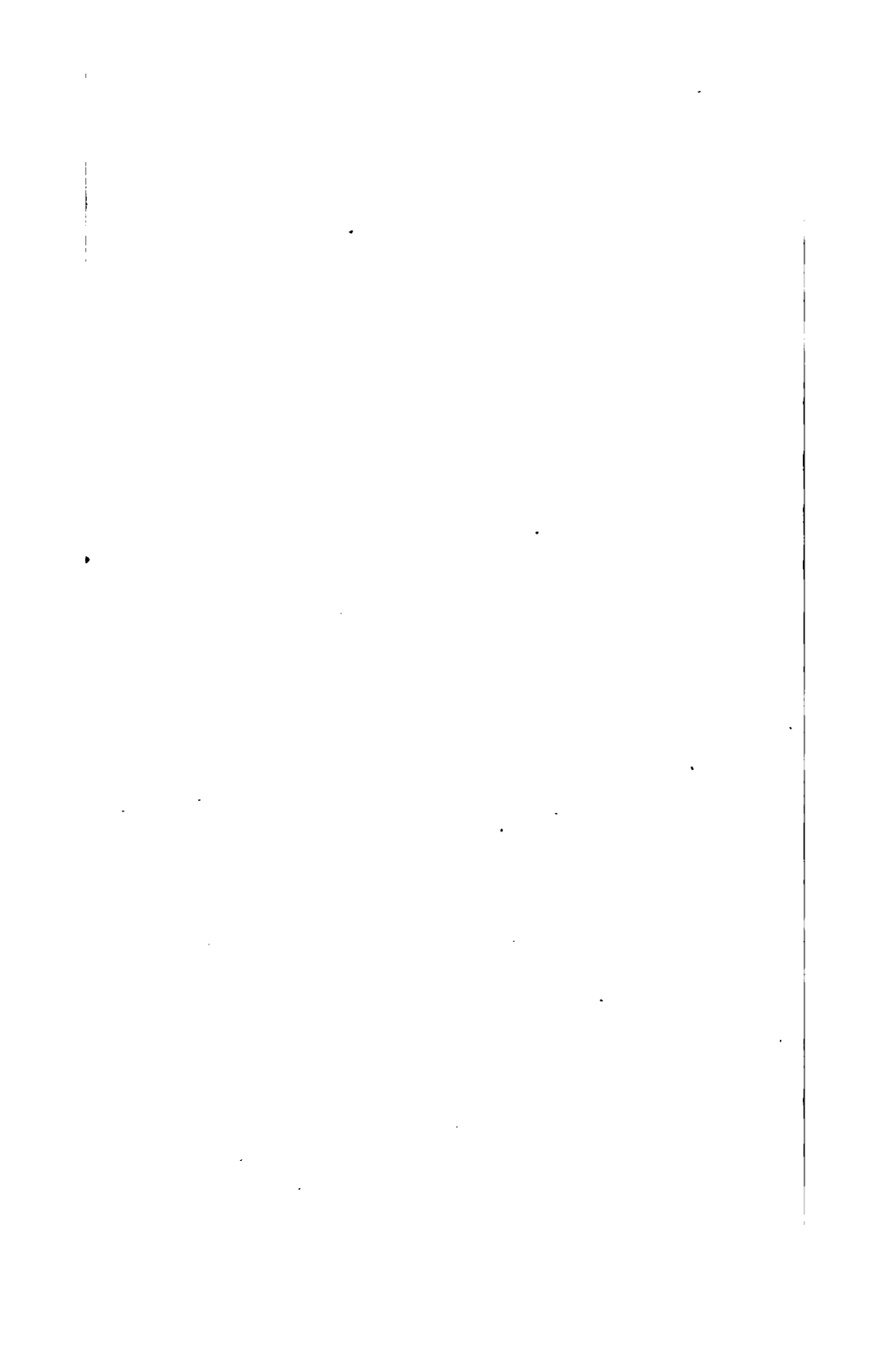
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WATLINGTON HILL;

A Poem,

BY

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.



“Rememberest thou my greyhounds true?”—SCOTT.



“Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures

“Whilst the landscape round it measures.”—MILTON.

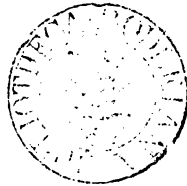


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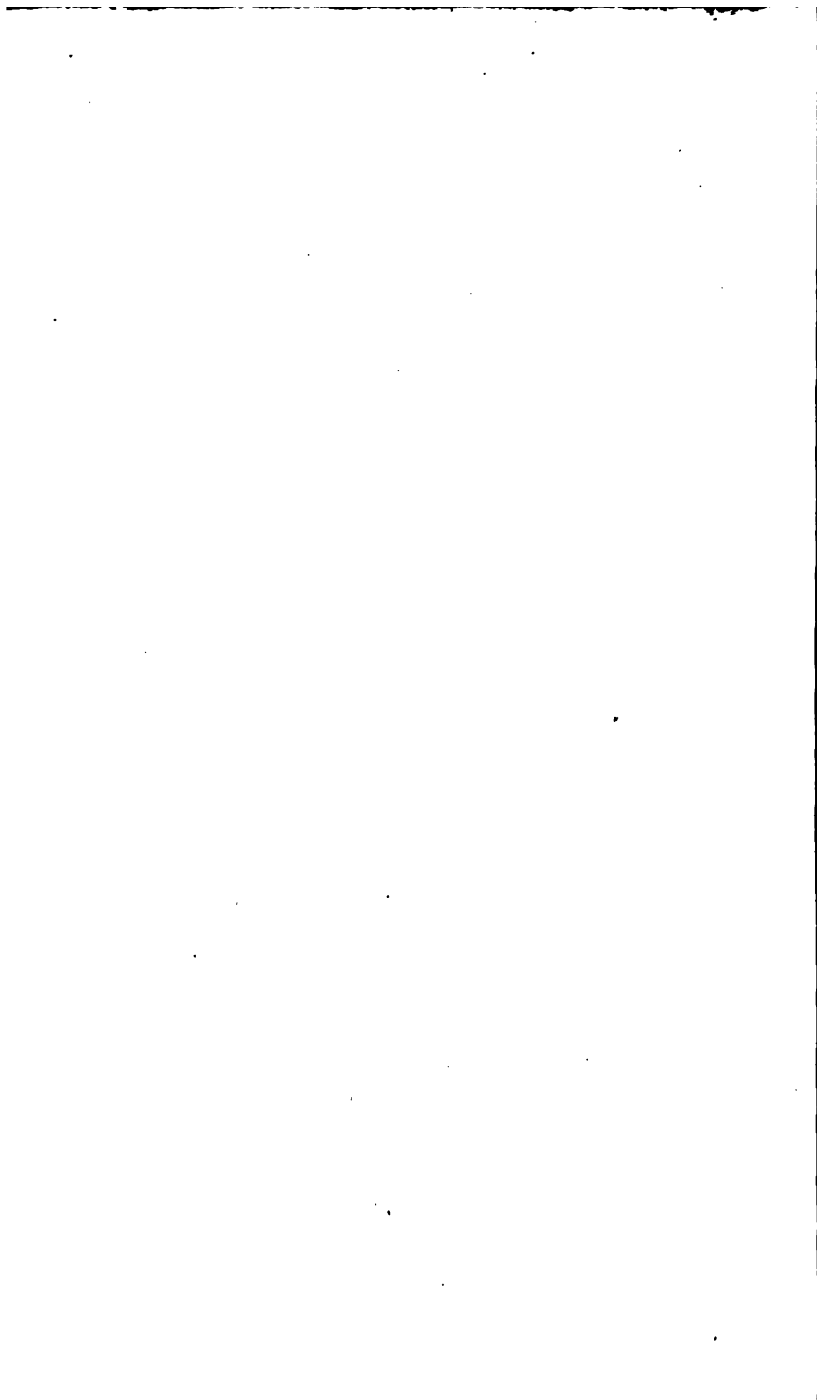
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1812.



280. 0. 594.



TO

JAMES WEBB, ESQ.

AND

WILLIAM HAYWARD, ESQ.

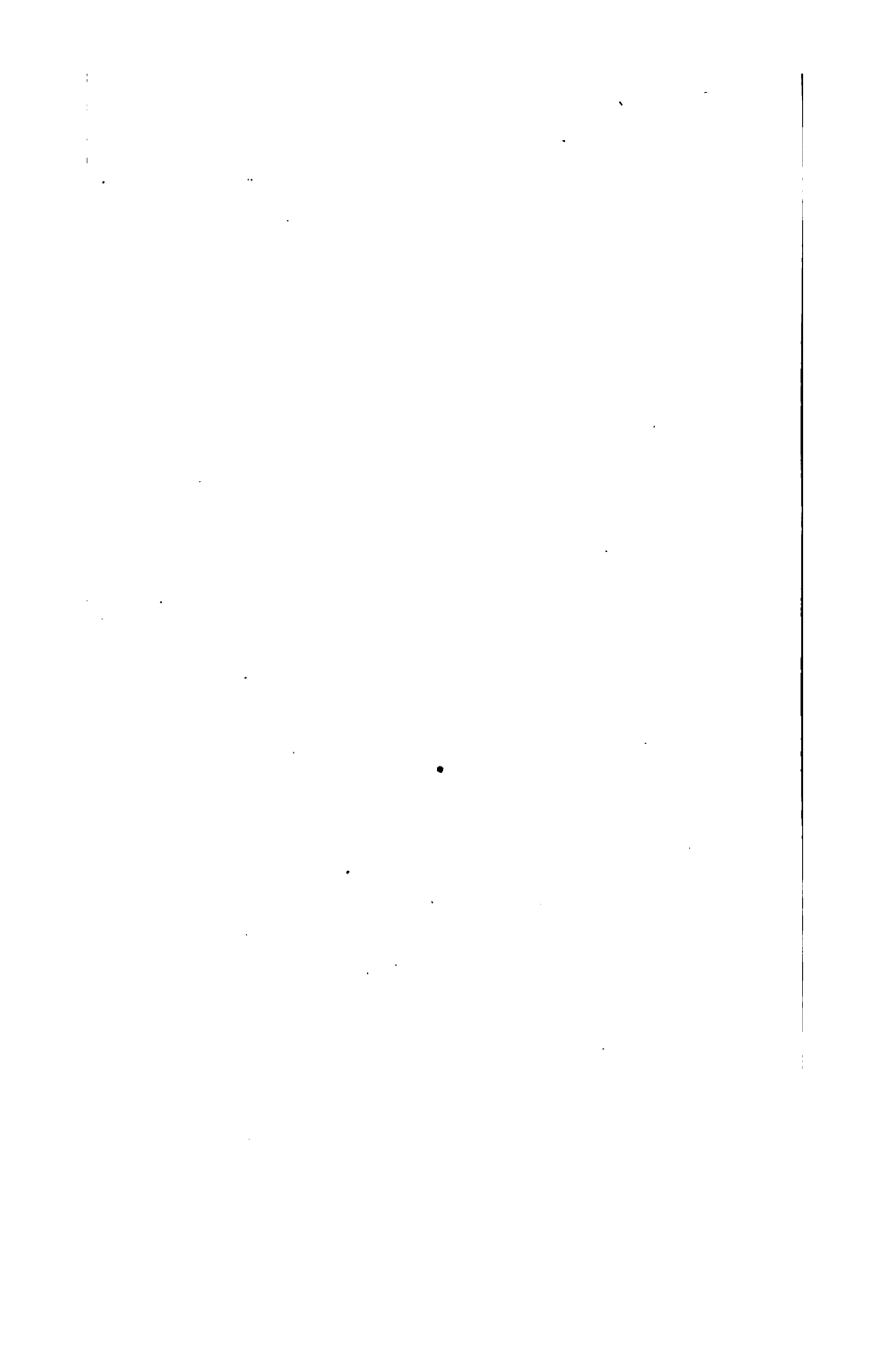
THIS POEM,

WRITTEN CHIEFLY FOR THEIR AMUSEMENT,

IS INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.



WATLINGTON HILL,

A POEM.

I.

'Tis pleasant to dance in lordly hall
 When the merry harp is ringing ;
'Tis sweet in the bow'r at ev'ning's fall
 To list to the night-bird's singing ;
'Tis lovely to view th' autumnal hue,
 As it gilds the woodland mountain ;
Or when summer glows, to pluck the rose,
 And quaff from the dew's pure fountain.

But fatigue in pleasure's guise is clad ;
And the song so sweet makes the light heart sad ;
And autumn tells of joys that fly ;
And summer's charms in languor die :
If ye would have all hope can bring,
Take the first morn of early spring !
If ye would warm your life-blood chill,
Go course on Watlington's fair hill !

II.

The mountain gale the vapor flings
Aloft upon his giant wings :
And now the sun, in high career,
Wakens a thousand dew-drops clear,
That in their downy moss-couch sleep,
Or from the trembling grass-top weep.

O lovelier than the brightest gem
That shines in princely diadem,
 How transient is thy sway!
Sportsmen and steeds, and hounds and hare,
Hunters and bunted from thy lair
Shall drive thee, Diamond of the air,
 And sweep thy charms away.
And yet, in sooth, upon the hill
Thy glitt'ring place they better fill:
 Upon the shelving mossy side,
 And on the furze-clad steep,
Th' impatient horsemen gaily ride,
The gallant dogs reluctant bide,
And ladies fair, though storms betide,
 Their anxious station keep.

III.

Greyhounds were there of noble name ;
Coursers who equal praise may claim ;
And many a bright and gentle dame.

O could my rustic string
Their beauty and their feats proclaim,
And give and steal the minstrel's fame,
Of all, of each, my harp should ring !
But light as he the strain should spring
That sings the greyhound rare ;
And soft as Beauty's plumy wing
The lay that paints the Fair.
Whilst harsh and rude the notes I fling,
Coursing nor Beauty dare I sing,
The greyhound nor the hare.

Yet, gentle maids, ye well may spy
Your triumphs in your lovers' eye:
And ye, kind sportsmen, well may claim
For gallant dogs scarce-rivall'd fame.
And durst I sing, in vent'rous guise,
Of ricks and turns, and falls and byes,
And all the courser's mysteries,
Then should the swan-neck'd *Nancy* show
As spotless as her fur of snow ;
Then should the *Sharks* successive reign,
And all their master's fame sustain ;
Nor *Windsor* shame his breeding high ;
Nor thou thy name, Northumbrian *Fly* ;
Nor thou, *Prince Hal*, thy namesake old,
" The nimble-footed mad-cap " bold ;
Nor thou the meed thy mother won,
My golden-crested *Marmion*.

IV.

Leave we them all : to stand awhile
Upon the topmost brow,
And mark how many a length'ning mile
The landscape spreads below.
Here let us stand ! The breezes chill
A healthful freshness breathe,
The blood with stirring quickness fill,
And Fancy's wildest garlands wreath.
How pure, how transient is the storm !
See in yon furze poor pass's form,
A vacant cradle seems,
Rock'd by the loud wind to and fro ;
Whilst the coy primrose blooms below,
Nurs'd by the southern beams :

**And over-head in richer gold
 The gorse's hardy flow'rs unfold,
 Framing wild wreaths most sweet, most fair,
 To hang around her mountain lair.**

V.

**Methinks I too should love to dwell
 Within this lone and cloud-capp'd cell :
 With all around of vast and rude ;
 A wild romantic solitude !
 With all below to charm the eye ;
 With nought above me, but the sky.
 Here would I watch each sailing cloud
 Scudding along in grandeur proud ;
 And mark the varying shadows cast
 On down or fallow as it past ;**

Or view the sudden catching light
Now part the shades and now unite ;
Till noon's refulgent brightness spread
Its glories o'er the mountain's head :
Then would I bend from my high place
To gaze upon th' horizon's space,
A tract sublime of various grace.

VI.

Yet first the charmed eye would greet
The lowland home-scene's vallies sweet,
Of wood and turf and field ;
Where the snug cot, the lordly seat,
Like grandeur and contentment meet,
And mutual beauty yield.

And first would trace the winding road
Which through the beech-wood leads,
By red-cloak'd maids and ploughmen trod,
Rich wains and prancing steeds.
And first admire those beechen trees,
Whose upper branches in the breeze,
All bare and polish'd seem to freeze ;
Whilst, feather'd like an archer's barb,
Each lower bough, in saffron garb,
Catches the rain-drops as they fall,
And answers to the night-wind's call.
Among those woods one chimney white
Just glances in the southern light,
Deep bosom'd in th' impervious glades,
The fairy bow'r of Britwell's shades.

16

Is it the woodman's fair retreat
Where merry children sport ?
Or the rough keeper's jovial seat,
Where hounds and huntsmen frequent meet,
And hold their sylvan court ?
Is it the laugh of infants gay,
Shaking the forest with their play,
That wakes the echoes round ?
Or trampling steeds at break of day,
The noisy pack, the clarion's lay ?
What wakes thy voice, coy echo, say ?
It is a holier sound.

VII.

There, from their native country driv'n,
The Nuns' sweet vespers rise to heav'n.

Exiles of France! In early life
 They fled the world's tumultuous strife,
 To find within a convent's breast
 The Present calm, the Future blest.
 They sought for peace, and peace they found,
 Till impious havoc, glaring round,
 Of earth, of heav'n, the ties unbound,
 And said, Maids, ye are free!
 But Freedom's prostituted sound
 To them was misery.
 Chas'd from their voluntary prison,
 They seem'd as from some earthquake risen,
 Where all they lov'd, where all they knew,
 Had vanish'd from their tear-dimm'd view.
 Nor place to sit them down and pray,
 Nor friends, nor home, nor grave, had they.

Sick'ning at war's tumultuous din
They fled that clime of woe and sin ;
And here they dwell, the pious band !
Honor'd and safe in Albion's land.
And though perchance a casual tear
Fall for the convent once so dear,
Yet sweet Contentment's patient smile,
Shall grace each placid cheek the while :
Here, where they keep their holy vow,
Here is their native country now :
For here, though all unknown the tongue,
The tenderest sound of welcome rung ;
Here pity beams in every eye ;
Here blest they live—more blest shall die.

VIII.

From pious Brittwell pass we now,
At Freedom's holy shrine to bow,
 On Chalgrove's honor'd field ;
An undistinguish'd speck it seems,
Where scarce the Sun's refulgent beams
 One spark of light can yield.
But in the field of History,
 Long, bright, undying is the page,
That tells of Chalgrove's victory,
 Of Hampden's virtuous rage.
Hampden ! thy name from age to age
The patriot heart shall fire ;
 The good, the fair, the brave, the sage
All weep thy funeral pyre.

Thy very enemy confest
The virtues of thy noble breast ;
Hard as it is amid the jar
Of falling thrones, of civil war,
To judge of Man's inconstant state ;
E'en he confest thee good and great.
How was the Stuart fall'n, when thou
Didst brave his power with dauntless brow :
How rais'd, when Falkland by him stood,
As great as thou, as wise, as good !
O who, by equal fame misled,
Who shall the righteous cause decide,
When for his King, Lord Falkland bled,
When Hampden for his country died !

IX.

Yet, field of blood ! though Time has now
Shed Fame's bright glories on thy brow ;
Though for the bones in whitening heaps,
The Peasant guiltless harvests reaps ;
Yet, field of blood, in thee I see
Naught but thy gory victory :
And joyful turn from targe and helm
To thy calm precincts, sweet Ewelme ;
Turn, joyful turn, from warring Man
To think on thee, benignest Anne !
Here wert thou wont to dwell, mild Queen !
Pious, and happy, and serene !
Rever'd, though oft by faction tost ;
Lov'd, though by faithless ingrates crost ;

Victress, where'er thy armies roam,
 But chiefly conqueror at home.
 A truth most rare thy urn might tell,
 " Her people lov'd Queen Anna well !"
 And Almshouses thy pity lent,
 And Churches form thy monument.

X.

How boldly yonder cloud so bright
 Throws out that clump of trees ;
 Scarce, till it crost th' ethereal light,
 Like the wren's plume on snow-ridge white,
 The keenest eye that wood could seize.
 'Tis distant Farringdon, I deem ;
 And far below, Thames' silver stream
 Thrids through the fair romantic bridge
 Of Wallingford's old town ;

And high above, the Whittenham ridge

Seems the gay scene to crown.

But what is that which, to the right,

Upon th' horizon's utmost verge,

A fairy picture glitters bright,

Like sea-foam on the crested surge ?

Is it the varying fleecy cloud

That takes in sport the figure proud,

Where domes and turrets seem to rise,

And spiry steeples mock our eyes ?

No ; real is that lovely scene !

'Tis England's boast ! 'Tis Learning's Queen !

'Tis Oxford !—Not th' unletter'd maid

May dare approach her hallow'd shade ;

Nor chant a requiem to each name

That waken'd there to deathless fame

Nor bid the Muse's blessing rest
For ever in her honor'd breast.

XI.

Oh, when I dared the Muse to name,
Did it not wake my spirit's flame !
Did it not guide my eye, my soul,
To yonder distant shadowy knoll,
And whisper in each joyous thrill,
'Tis Milton's home, 'tis Forest Hill !
Yes ; there he liv'd, and there he sung,
When life and hope and love were young ;
There, Grace and Genius at his side,
He won his half-disdainful bride ;
And there the lark, " in spite of sorrow,"
Still at his " window bade good morrow,

“ Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,

“ Or the twisted eglantine.”

O happy hill ! thy summer vest

Lives in his richest coloring drest ;

O happy hill ! thou saw'st him blest.

Thou saw'st him blest, the greatest man

That ever trod life's grovelling span ;—

Shakespeare alone with him could try,

Undazzled and untir'd, the sky.

And thou didst view his blooming charm,

That eagle plumed like the dove,

Whose very sleeping grace could warm

Th' Italian maiden's heart to love.

Thou saw'st him in his happier hour,

When life was love, and genius, power ;

When at his touch th' awaken'd string
All joyous hail'd the laughing spring ;
And, like the sun, his radiant eyes
Glanc'd on thy earthly Paradise.
Thou didst not see those eyes so bright
For ever quench'd in cheerless night ;
Thou didst not hear his anguish'd lays
Of " evil tongues and evil days."
Thou saw'st but his gay youth, sweet spot !
Happiest for what thou sawest not !—
And happy still !—Though in thy sod
No blade remain by Milton trod ;
Though the sweet gale, that sweeps thy plain,
No touch of Milton's breath retain ;
Yet here the bards of later days
Shall roam to view thee and to praise.

Here Jones, ere yet his voice was fame,
A lone romantic votary came ;
He too is gone, untimely gone !
But, lur'd by him, full many a one
Shall tread thy hill on pilgrimage ;
And Minstrel, Patriot, or Sage,
Who wept not o'er his Indian bier,
Shall mourn him with his Milton here.
For till our English tongue be dead,
From Freedom's breast till life be fled,
Till Poetry's quick pulse be still,
None shall forsake thee, Forest hill.

XII.

Few are the scenes of power to chain
The rapt enthusiast's mind,

Like that where Milton's wond'rous strain
Still seems to linger o'er the plain,
 Or whisper in the wind :
Not pent within the crowded town
Where meanness sweeps away renown :
But fresh and innocent and fair,
As if the mighty master there
Still flung his witch-notes on the air !
 Yet Taste and Fancy's visions gay
 Life's fond Affections shun,
 And fade at Feeling's light away,
 Like stars before the sun.
The spirits of the honor'd dead
At Friendship's living touch are fled :
For here, beneath fair Sherburn's shade,
My Zosia dwelt, my Polish maid !

My friend most tender and most true !
My friend, ere friendship's name we knew !
The partner of those blissful hours,
When the world seem'd one bank of flowers ;
Life but a summer's cloudless morn ;
And Love, a rose without a thorn.
Fleeting as that illusive day,
Was Friendship's joy, was Zosia's stay :
For when o'er her majestic form
Youth shed his mantling roses warm,
When Beauty saw her work matur'd,
And Grandeur aw'd whom Grace allur'd,
Th' imperious mandate harshly bore
The finish'd charmer from our shore ;
Bore her from friendship, bliss, and love,
Envy, neglect, contempt to prove

From hearts who, frozen as their clime,
Would antedate the work of Time,
And nip her beauties in their prime.
O ever-lov'd ! return again !
Return ! and soon the blooming train
Of childish friends shall meet to share
Thy soft caress, my Polish fair !
Again shall view thy sparkling eye
And Empress-form admiringly ;
Each emulously crowding round,
Each list'ning for one silver sound ;
And thou to all, with Queen-like smile,
Wilt sweet attention show the while,
Of kindness full and courtesy ;—
Though one alone (O happiest she !)

Scarce from thy tongue shall greeting hear,
Or find thy love, but in thy tear.
The dews of Heav'n fall not so sweet
As Friendship's tears with joy replete!
Haste on my breast such dews to rain!
My ever-lov'd, return again!

XIII.

The pause has check'd my spirit glad;
Deep, doubting hope is ever sad;
But sadder thoughts now intervene
To cloud that sweet and tranquil scene.
Direr than absence is the foe,
Who waits to give the fatal blow:
Weeping within that mansion fair
Sits Filial Love—Death hovers there.

He comes not now to lead the bloom
Of youth to an undreaded tomb ;
He comes not now to tame the pride
Of matron health confirm'd and tried ;
Not tow'ring man provokes his rage ;
'Tis woman, feebleness, and age.
And yet, nor beauty early cropp'd,
Nor manhood's strength untimely dropp'd,
Could waken more regretful sighs,
Or more with sorrow blend surprise.
For she, his noble prey, had stood
Like an old oak in Sherburn wood,
In varied verdure richly deck'd,
Whose ample branches wav'd uncheck'd ;
And though dead boughs commingling grew,
Abrupt and bare, of darker hue ;

Though weeds minute and yellow moss,
 With varied tints, the bark emboss;
 Yet lovely was its pleasant shade,
 Lovely the trunk with moss inlaid,
 Lovely the long-hair'd lichens grey,
 Lovely its pride and its decay.
 Such, Macclesfield, thou wert! Old Time
 Himself had spar'd thy beamy prime
 Uninjur'd, as on Grecia's strand
 He views the works of Phidias' hand;
 Boast of the world! whose heav'nly forms
 Can chain the winds, arrest the storms,
 And bid the sun, the dews, the air,
 Perfection's noblest image spare.
 So Time had past o'er thee, bright dame;
 All chang'd; but thou wert still the same.

Still skill'd to give the fading flower
More brilliant life by Painting's power ;
Still skill'd the nimble steel to ply
With quick inventful industry ;
Still skill'd to frame the moral rhyme,
Or point with Gospel truths the lay sublime ;
But rarer yet, 'mid age's frost
The fire of youth thou hadst not lost ;
Still at another's bliss could'st glow ;
Still melt to hear another's woe ;
Still give the poor man's cares relief ;
Still bend to soothe the mourner's grief.
Though near a century's course had sped,
And bleach'd thy venerable head,
By age's vice and woe untold
Thy years remain'd—Thou wert not old !

And so to live and so to die,
Is endless rare felicity.
But there is one, whose ready tear
Bedews thy pale cheek on thy bier ;
One, whom my heart, my tongue, my lays,
Dare to admire, but not to praise.
O friend of Zosia ! friend of all,
Whom misery, pain, and want enthrall !
Be comforted ! though ne'er again
Thy mother's hand thy hand shall strain ;
Though never shall she feel thy cares,
Congenial joys her spirit shares :
Congenial, yet superior, giv'n
By sister angels in her native heav'n.
Oh ! who would weep the lov'd-one dead,
When death is bliss ! be comforted.

XIV.

Why thus in fond, though vain, relief,
 With weeping praise perpetuate grief !
 Why on the dead, the absent, muse ?
 And joy from present friends refuse !
 Why dwell on yonder mournful dome,
 And shun these friends' delightful home !
 'Twere hard to sing thy varying charm,
 Thou Cottage, Mansion, Village, Farm.
 Thou beautiful Epitome
 Of all that useful is and rare,
 Where Comfort sits with smiling air,
 And laughing Hospitality.
 'Twere hard to sing—And harder still
 The dearer charms those halls that fill.

'Twere hard to sing—The sun is low ;

Quick to the lovely Farm we go,

Its strongest spells to find ;

And cluster'd round the blazing fire,

When beauty, virtue, wit inspire,

O they that learn not to admire,

Dull must they be, and deaf, and blind !

NOTES.



STANZA III.

“ THEN should the swan-neck'd *Nancy* show
“ As spotless as her fur of snow ;
“ Then should the *Sharks* successive reign,
“ And all their master's fame sustain ;
“ Nor *Windsor* shame his breeding high ;
“ Nor thou thy name, Northumbrian *Fly* ;
“ Nor thou, *Prince Hal*, thy name-sake old,
“ ‘ The nimble-footed madcap ’ bold ;
“ Nor thou the meed thy mother won,
“ My golden-created *Marmion*.”

NOTES.

Celebrated greyhounds belonging to Messrs. Newell, Hayward, Webb, Hunt, and Mitford. Marmion is the son of Dr. Mitford's Maria, who won the Ilsley cup for 1808. Mr. Hayward's famous Shark was the sire of Lord Rivers's Remark, and the grandsire of Maria, and of Rose-bud, who won the cup, last season, at Swaffham.

VI.

"The fairy bower of Brittwell's shades."

Brittwell nunnery. The retreat of several aged nuns, who were driven from France by the revolution.

VIII.

"At Freedom's holy shrine to bow,

"On Chalgrove's honor'd field."

The spot where Hampden fell.

NOTES.

VIII.

“ Thy very enemy confest
“ The virtues of thy noble breast.”

See the character of Hampden in Lord Clarendon's
History.

IX.

“ And joyful turn from targe and helm
“ To thy calm precincts, sweet Ewelme ;
“ Turn, joyful turn, from warring Man,
“ To think on thee, benignest Anne.”

Queen Anne had a palace at Ewelme : and the alms-
houses, which still remain there, were founded by her
munificence.

XI.

“ 'Tis Milton's home, 'tis Forest Hill ! ”

NOTES.

The following letter of Sir William Jones gives the fullest and most interesting account of this delightful village, from which Milton married his first wife, Miss Mary Powel. Its length is indeed disproportioned to the other notes; but from such a man, and on such a subject, no one, it is presumed, will think it too long.

“ To Lady Spencer.

“ *7th Sept. 1769.*

“ The necessary trouble of correcting the first printed sheets of my history, prevented me to-day from paying a proper respect to the memory of Shakespeare, by attending his jubilee. But I was resolved to do all the honor in my power to as great a poet, and set out in the morning, in company with a friend, to visit a place, where Milton spent some part of his life, and where, in all probability, he composed several of his earliest productions. It is a small village, situated on a pleasant hill, about three miles from Oxford, and

NOTES.

called Forest-Hill, because it formerly lay contiguous to a forest, which has since been cut down. The poet chose this place of retirement after his first marriage; and he describes the beauties of his retreat in that fine passage of his L'Allegro :

Sometime walking, not unseen,
By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green.

* * * *

While the ploughman near at hand
Whistles o'er the furrow'd land ;
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe ;
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale,
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landscape round it measures :
Russet lawns, and fallows grey,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray ;
Mountains, on whose barren breast
The laboring clouds do often rest ;

NOTES.

**Meadows trim, with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide;
Towers and battlements it sees,
Bosom'd high in tufted trees.**

* * * * *

**Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two aged oaks, &c.**

It was neither the proper season of the year, nor time of the day, to hear all the rural sounds, and see all the objects mentioned in this description; but, by a pleasing concurrence of circumstances, we were saluted, on our approach to the village, with the music of the mower and his scythe; we saw the ploughman intent upon his labor, and the milkmaid returning from her country employment.

“As we ascended the hill, the variety of beautiful objects, the agreeable stillness and natural simplicity of the whole scene, gave us the highest pleasure. We at length reached the spot, whence Milton undoubtedly

NOTES.

took most of his images ; it is on the top of the hill, from which there is a most extensive prospect on all sides : the distant mountains, that seemed to support the clouds, the villages and turrets, partly shaded with trees of the finest verdure, and partly raised above the groves that surrounded them : the dark plains and meadows of a greyish color, where the sheep were feeding at large, in short, the view of the streams and rivers, convinced us that there was not a single useless or idle word in the above-mentioned description, but that it was a most exact and lively representation of nature. Thus will this fine passage, which has always been admired for its elegance, receive an additional beauty from its exactness. After we had walked, with a kind of poetical enthusiasm, over this enchanted ground, we returned to the village.

“ The poet's house was close to the church ; the greatest part of it has been pulled down, and what remains belongs to an adjacent farm. I am informed

NOTES.

that several papers in Milton's own hand were found by the gentleman, who was last in possession of the estate. The tradition of his having lived there is current among the villagers: one of them showed us a ruinous wall that made part of his chamber, and I was much pleased with another, who had forgotten the name of Milton, but recollected him by the title of The Poet.

“ It must not be omitted, that the groves near this village are famous for nightingales, which are so elegantly described in the *Penseroso*. Most of the cottage windows are overgrown with sweet-briars, vines, and honey-suckles; and that Milton's habitation had the same rustic ornament, we may conclude from his description of the lark bidding him good-morrow,

Thro' the sweet-briar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine;

for it is evident, that he meant a sort of honey-suckle by the eglantine; though that word is commonly used

NOTES.

for the sweet-briar, which he could not mention twice in the same couplet.

“ If I ever pass a month or six weeks at Oxford in the summer, I shall be inclined to hire and repair this venerable mansion, and to make a festival for a circle of friends in honor of Milton, the most perfect scholar, as well as the sublimest poet, that our country ever produced. Such an honor will be less splendid, but more sincere and respectful, than all the pomp and ceremony on the banks of the Avon.

“ I have the honor, &c.

“ W. JONES.”

Lord Teignmouth's Edition of Sir William Jones's Works, Vol. I. p. 118.

XI.

“ And thou didst view his blooming charm,

“ That eagle plumed like the dove,

“ Whose very sleeping grace could warm

“ Th' Italian maiden's heart to love.”

NOTES.

There is somewhere extant a wild romantic story of an Italian lady of high birth, who, in travelling through England, saw Milton, then very young, asleep upon a bank. Enamored of his beauty, she wrote some verses expressive of her admiration, laid them upon his hand, and left him still sleeping. This incident is said to have occasioned his travels in Italy, where he hoped to meet his unknown fair-one ; and to have been the first cause of his assiduous cultivation of Italian literature.

XII.

“ For here, beneath fair Sherburn’s shade

“ My Zosia dwelt, my Polish maid ! ”

Sherburn Lodge, the seat of the late Countess Dowager of Macclesfield, under whose care Zosia Choynowska, the early and beloved friend of the Author, was placed for education.

NOTES.

XIII.

“ But there is one, whose ready tear
“ Bedews thy pale cheek on thy bier.”

The Right Hon. Lady Mary Parker.

XIV.

“ Twere hard to sing thy varying charm,
“ Thou cottage, mansion, village, farm !”

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Esq.

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